

## Stewart County School System

Stewart County School System  
Investing in Educational Excellence (IE2) Partnership Contract  
Board Approved -

### **Investing in Educational Excellence Partnership Application and Contract**

In accordance with the State of Georgia Article 4, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-84, it is the intent of the Stewart County School System to operate as an Investing in Educational Excellence (IE2) school system through the development of the IE2 partnership between our school system and the State Board of Education.

The following components consist of the current planning for completing the application and developing the contract necessary to take effect on July 1, 2015.

### **The Case**

#### **Stewart County School System Overview**

The Stewart County School System is a rural district located in southwest Georgia. Stewart County is located along the Chattahoochee River. The county is large in size; however, it is sparsely populated. The county consists of five rural towns: Lumpkin, Richland, Omaha, Louvale, and Brooklyn. The school district has an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. The school district offers opportunities for students to participate in football, basketball, track, CTAE courses, drama courses, business courses, and AP courses. Stewart County System is a place where educators are “Building the Future, One Child at a Time”.

The school district has many challenges to include a large population of students who live in poverty, limited financial resources, poor parent involvement, limited 21st century technology, teacher retention, and poor facilities. Despite of the many challenges, all three schools have been designated as reward schools (this is based on data from 2012). During the 2013-2014 school year, the district saw a drop in state assessment scores and the graduation rate. This can be attributed to the highly qualified and effective teaching staff who chose to leave Stewart County. The remote location of Stewart County and the district’s inability to adequately supplement the salaries of the teachers and leaders make it difficult to replace them.

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The district's number one priority is to improve students' achievement. Teacher retention is the second priority for Stewart County Schools along with expenditure controls, parental involvement, limited 21st century technology, and poor facilities.

The vision of the Stewart County School System is to *provide a quality education to all students.*

This commitment to our students will be further realized through a contract with the State Board of Education to operate in an Investing in Educational Excellence (IE2) partnership that advances students' achievement and ensures sound operational practices as monitored by the Georgia Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

With the IE2/Strategic Waiver Contract, Stewart County Schools will be able to address the issue of low academic achievement, teacher retention, and expenditure controls.

In addition to offering an alternative placement for students, the IE2/Strategic Waiver would allow us to provide more services to students if we were able to waive the middle school program criteria (O.C.G.A.20-2-290; 20-14-33) and SBOE Rule 160-4-2-05; educational program requirements (O.C.G.A.20-2-153 to 20-2-155) SBOE Rule 160-4-5-01;160-4-2-17; 160-4-2-38), education program for gifted students: (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151, § 20-2-161) and SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 (IDDD) related to staffing, class size, and program delivery/time/requirements/models, and the comprehensive health and physical education program: SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.12 related to scheduling and minutes of instruction. school day and school year for students and employees: (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151, 20-2-160, 20-2-161.1, 20-2-165, 20-2-168, 20-2-168(A), 20-2-240) and SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.02 related to requirements for minutes of instruction at each level, scheduling, and staffing. ; Promotion and Retention: (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-283) and SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.11 related to the timeline for decision making while preserving due process rights; Competencies and Core Curriculum, Online Learning (O.C.G.A § 20-2-141.1, O.C.G.A § 20-2-142 and SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.48) The ability to waive the requirements in the rules are so critical because Stewart County is such a small system with limited resources and the district needs the flexibility to make adjustment to meet the needs of the students in Stewart County.

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The most important factor that influences the academic success of a school is the teacher. In Stewart County, many of the teachers change from year to year. This affects the academic achievement of the students. In addition, the district suffers a major loss of the money and time in the area of professional learning. Teacher retention has been an issue in Stewart County for several years. The IE2/Strategic Waiver Contract would be allowed to waive financial requirements such as minimum direct classroom expenditures (O.C.G.A.20-2-171), QBE financing (O.C.G.A 20-2-160), Categorical allotment requirements (O.C.G.A. 20-2-183 to 20-2-186 and salary schedule requirements (O.C.G.A.20-2-212).

Having this flexibility would allow the district to use the funds to provide competitive bonuses to attract and retain highly effective teachers and other staff members. In addition, having the flexibility in the use of fund would allow the district to purchase more technology and to employ people to help in the utilization of the technology. This flexibility will also allow the district to provide more personnel to support the teaching and learning process with in the district.

In addition to the academic waivers and financial waivers we need personnel waivers. As it stands now, we have a part-time curriculum and a part-time person who also serves as the principal of our elementary school. Stewart County Schools does not have the resources to support a fulltime person in these positions. The IE2/Strategic Waiver will allow the district to waive the class size/staffing requirements (O.C.G.A.20-2-182; 20-2-152) and SBOE Rules 160-51-08(IEC); 160-5-1-22(CGB); 160-4-7-14. The students do not have many of the CTAE class and AP, and exploratory class that other students in the state enjoy. The IE2/strategic waiver would allow the district to waive certification requirements (O.C.G.A.20-2-200, O.C.G.A.20-2-108),( O.C.G.A.20-2-201), (O.C.G.A.20-2-04). This waiver would allow the district to provide these types of experiences for the students by employing teachers who have the skill and knowledge in a particular area but may not have the certification..

In previous years, the district has requested waivers for graduation requirements and personnel requirements.

Upon approval of the IE2/ Strategic waiver contract, the implementation of allowable actions will begin.